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How to Nurture, Rebuild Relationships

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Nurturing, Rebuilding Relationships

Your happiness in life depends more on relationships than anything else. And building good relationships does not happen by chance. You have to work on it, not only forming new friendships, but also nurturing your existing relationships, starting with your own family members. Prevention is better than cure. Hence start off by working on your existing relationships and see where you stand.

Do this introspection seriously, it will help you be more happy and satisfied.

- Who are the most important people in your life, and why?
- What are the good qualities in your Mom or Dad that makes you want to be their friend?
- What qualities do you look for in a good friend?
- Write why boys/girls make better friends.
- What are the major factors that spoil a relationship? List out at least two or three of them.
- Your good qualities - why anyone would like to be your friend.
- How you dealt with a relationship that went bad in the past.
- Effect of pressure of friends on your activities or habits.



- Write about one significant relationship that has enriched your life: for how long? Does it follow definition?
- Write about one relationship that is bothering you or is of concern: behavior of that person, your contribution, what efforts you have made.
- What are the major factors that build a relationship? List out at least two or three of them.



Try a simple and nice way to celebrate and nurture a close relationship.

Construct with dates, a “You and Me” Calendar



- ★ When I met you first:
- ★ When I felt very close to you:
- ★ When we shared something beautiful:
- ★ When you gave me a gift I treasure:
- ★ When we had a big fight:
- ★ When we spent beautiful moments together:



- ★ When I really missed you:
- ★ When I felt very proud of you:
- ★ When I felt you are no longer with me:
- ★ When I needed you most:



- ★ When you touched me with a simple gesture:
- ★ When I felt very jealous about you:
- ★ When you wrote a nice note to me:
- ★ When I rejoiced in your success:
- ★ When you said something that really hurt me:
- ★ When I want to spend the day exclusively with you:
- ★ When we will invite someone to share our joy:
- ★ When I would like to give you a special gift:
- ★ When we will watch the full moon together:
- ★ When we will write long letters and exchange them:

Add, delete, modify, but do make the calendar, and celebrate each of the dates that you have marked above, every year.



What Can We Do to Build Relationships and Reduce Loneliness?

1. Stop lamenting that you do not have friends or people who love you. Repeatedly telling yourself you lack company - negative affirmations - makes you actually believe that you are incapable of attracting nice people to you.



2. Instead, repeat a positive mantra that you are connected to everyone in the universe, you are at peace, and that you can relate to anyone, anywhere.
3. Do a visualization of people you would like to meet, the interactions you would like to have with them (do not day-dream of an “ideal” person, but many people who can fill in different emotional needs. Believe in your heart that such good people do exist. Only if you acknowledge that there are good human beings, will you be able to identify them.





4. Make a resolution that YOU will reach out to people – not in search of a perfect partner or friend, but to get some warmth and to learn something from each of them. Do not wait for others to come to you. There are many good human beings who also do not intrude into others' privacy like you. How will they know that you are open to interacting with them?
5. Develop the characteristics and the type of communication that you would like others to give to you. If you want others to be sensitive to your needs or emotions, start off by being sensitive to the needs and emotions of others.
6. Do not expect immediate returns. Be patient, believe in yourself or your higher self that things WILL happen. Keep moving on every time you find that you are not getting a response, not by becoming bitter or disappointed, but by telling yourself that maybe a better person awaits you.

Communication is the key to relationships, and if we do not learn to communicate our needs, our wants and about ourselves, we will find it very difficult to attract people who will care for us. We need to build communication skills on a continuous basis, and the long-term results are fantastic.

Why Do Relationships Deteriorate?



1. **Lack of communication**, or miscommunication, certainly stands out as the most prominent and frequent cause. If you value a relationship, ensure that you somehow continue to get your view across, and look for signals from the other. If he does not communicate verbally, look for non-verbal signals.



2. **Poor role models.** Since we learn through imitation, we tend to expect from one person what we were getting from our role model, e.g. a husband who expects his wife to behave like his mother.
3. **Not taking responsibility.** In an era when we are running away from close relationships, we are not learning how to take responsibility on a long-term basis. The attitude of “**only if you do this, then I will do that**” often destroys a very promising relationship.



4. **Involving third persons** and their views to determine your interactions. “**What will my mother think if I do that to my wife?**” can make a situation so awkward that eventually neither the mother, nor the wife, and not even the husband is happy.
5. **Lack of mental energy:** At times, we just tend to give up because we are too tired to even make the efforts we know we should be putting in. If and when such a situation arises, one needs to build back the motivation, and even discuss with the other person the reasons for the lethargy.
6. **Carrying past baggage** into a new relationship. No person who comes into our life can take (or SHOULD take) responsibility for what we have gone through earlier. A woman who did not get love from her father, tries to make her husband “**father**” her, and the consequence is that neither can he be a good husband nor a substitute father.
7. **Neglect:** In fact, quite often we tend to neglect our stable and long-term relationships, taking it for granted that they will now move on smoothly without any turbulence. This could be because of a wide variety of reasons.



8. **Not giving Space:** It is also equally important to ensure that you give sufficient space in your close relationships. Too much of anything is bad, and so it is in relationships. Suffocating someone with your love is a sure way to push the person away. Very often a person who loves another very much, keeps smothering him or her with love, and is quite surprised when the other person starts backing off. Making oneself too freely available, being predictable, insisting on doing things for the other, and taking complete “**charge**” of the other person’s life, can be very damaging to a relationship. This happens because some of us do not understand the difference between the other person’s “**needs**” and “**wants**.” Fulfilling his needs is good, but only if he wants them to be fulfilled. Open communication, careful observation of body language, and bringing variety in your actions can ensure that you do not push away the person you love.

Do some introspection and check out which of these are applicable to you (for any one specific relationship).

- ➔ I am uncomfortable acknowledging the relationship.
- ➔ I feel some other person may dislike my nurturing this relationship.
- ➔ I am not sure whether the person wants reciprocation from me, or I feel that I will be intruding into the person’s privacy.
- ➔ I feel inferior and incapable of doing anything for this person.



- ➔ I have taken this relationship for granted and am presuming that it will continue like this forever.



- ➔ I am too busy nurturing other relationships of people who keep making demands of me.
- ➔ I am not aware what I should do to nurture this relationship.

The answers will give you an indication why you should maintain this particular relationship. The next step would be to check how we can prevent deterioration.

To avoid a good relationship getting strained, ask yourself what is more important to you ...

Being Happy or Being Right?



What is more important to you – “**being happy**” or “**being right**”? You will notice that most power struggles are aimed at proving “**I am right**”. This is at least partially due to our upbringing that taught us in childhood that it is **shameful** to be wrong. Parents who drilled into us that we are **bad** if we do **wrong** things, leave a permanent impression on us that we should strive to not only be right, but also prove that we are right. And being right is always in comparison with others. When we show that the other person is wrong, the automatic implication is that we are right.





In close adult relationships, trying to prove that one is right, leads to severe erosion of happiness, and, possibly, breakdown of the relationship. One comes across so many intimate relationships where, over the years, two people have drawn up battle-lines, entrenched themselves, and react to the slightest of stimulation. One word from the other person, even a change in tone of voice, and we are ready to pounce with our judgment of **"I know what is coming now"**. This again may be related to our childhood indoctrination. Whenever you find yourself behaving in such a manner, do ask yourself whether the situation reminds you of the way your parents treated you, or whether it brings back memories of unresolved childhood issues.

When a loving relationship has lost its spontaneity and the warmth, the persons concerned come to the conclusion that their needs are not being met by the other person.

Hence, neither is willing to let go. Both take up the stand that **"if you do not fulfill my needs FIRST, I will not even attempt to fulfill yours"**. This **"Me First"** attitude creates a stalemate, and whatever joy there is in the relationship also wears off.

Another sad part of power struggles is that we often carry them into our subsequent relationships. We do not want to take chances, because we have a hard time in letting go of the previous bad experiences, and, thinking that we are only playing safe, automatically start playing power games with the next person. In most cases the person who has now come into our life is unaware and unwilling to help us resolve these old issues, and takes our action as a personal insult. This may lead to either a breakdown of the nascent and budding relationship, or the beginning of another power struggle. In either case, the casualty is our happiness.



I have a request: Stop reading this for a minute, and tell, call up, or write to someone who is very dear to you, and tell him or her how important your relationship is, and how much you care for that person. A positive stroke without occasion or reason has a very deep impact. **Please do it Now!**



Despite your best efforts, what do you do

When Relationships Go Bad?



Some relationships start off on a bad footing. Convenience, softness of one of the persons concerned, extraneous circumstances, pressure from others – any of such factors may make it plod on despite the fact that it has never really blossomed or strengthened. The earlier these relationships are nipped in the bud, the better it is for every one concerned. The “**let me try once more**” attitude rarely leads to any positive results, and may only make the parting more bitter.



Despite the best of intentions, even long-term relationships often do go bad. The failure may be due to one person's actions or attitude, or it may be due to no one's fault. We start almost all our relationships with great hopes and expectations. We learn to form a relationship with our parents



from the time we become aware of our individuality. We form bonds with our siblings, our extended relatives, and then with our peers. When we choose friends, we do so because we like something about them and feel happy in their company. Some relationships are long-lasting, some just wither away with time. Those that wither away slowly do not generally affect us and we too move on with our lives.

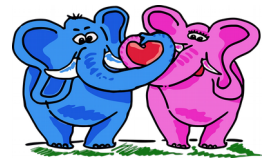
On the other hand, if a relationship suddenly takes a downturn, it can take an emotional toll on the person who is caught unawares. It could happen in various ways:

1. Finding out that the other person has let you down.
2. Discovering an unacceptable bad quality of the other person.
3. Being cheated, ridiculed or otherwise ill-treated by the other.
4. Sudden cooling off by the other person without assigning a reason.
5. The other person making accusations against you.



6. A third person influencing either or both opinions.
7. Being faced with an “**either-or**” choice between two relationships.
8. You feel that it is in the better interest for the other person to move on in life.
9. When you feel that small actions of the other over a long period of time, have led to the proverbial “**last straw on the camel’s back**”.
10. When you discover that the other person is trying to control, possess or manipulate you against your will.
11. When a relationship becomes “**toxic**”, i.e. anything that one does only leads to the other person getting more upset, pained, vindictive or angry, or when both start attributing hidden intentions or vested interest to each action of the other.

Practical ways to build back a relationship, and a happier and more fulfilling life



1. Understand that relationships play the greatest role in our happiness, and no amount of power or proving oneself “**right**” can compensate for a harmonious and happy relationship. Our priority should be to make the relationship warmer and more loving, not to prove a point.
2. Reinforce to yourself that you are an individual in your own right, and a complete human being. If you seek your completeness by the action or words of another person, however close the person may be to you, you will remain incomplete and inadequate.



3. Identify the relationship(s) where a power struggle is going on. Do not bother about who started it, who is responsible, etc. Just accept the fact that the relationship is not harmonious because a power struggle is going on.
4. Ask yourself whether this relationship in any way reminds you of your past, your childhood, or the way your parents behaved with you. If there does seem to be a connection then you first need to resolve the unresolved issues of the past.



5. Ask yourself what the worst will be that can happen if you let go and allow the other person to gain an upper hand. What exactly are you afraid of losing?
6. Take the first step of letting go. Tell yourself that you do not want anything in return, at least not right now. Give the relationship sufficient time to change over. Enjoy the pride of your having voluntarily given up something that you could have demanded. Remind yourself that you are doing it for someone you love, or at least loved before the relationship deteriorated.
7. Next, turn the focus on gaining control over yourself rather than trying to gain control over another human being. In the final count, you can only change one human being in this world – and that is yourself. Train yourself to identify your feelings, to manage them properly, to give them suitable outlets, and to respond in the right way, regardless of how others treat you. This will give you a sense of pride and satisfaction, and will significantly enhance your self-esteem.



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Dear Ali, August 3rd, the topic for your talk being **Rebuilding Relationships**, I want to share an incident in my life. It is about our niece, my husband's sister's daughter, a 24-year-old girl at that time. An only child, she was living with her mother in Hyderabad (she had lost her father 4 years ago). The mother and daughter went to visit their neighbour's newborn baby at a nursing home and her mother collapsed and passed away there, leaving this girl in an absolute state of shock.

We were informed in Bangalore. We rushed and so did other very close relatives. After the funeral and all rituals were over, all our relatives (all very 'well-off' people) left. Nobody even bothered to enquire about the child left all alone.

My husband and his older brother decided that the best would be for her to go with us. They asked me and I being the most compassionate and gentle in the whole family said, "Of course, yes." She came and blended in very well. After about a year we got her married and she was very happy in her new life. She used to visit us and things were very well between us. After sometime she started acting strangely, distancing herself from us, and making it a point for others to notice it - we were perplexed. My husband was worried about her and tried to counsel her but she would not listen. So we kept away.

My husband passed away a few years later. My sons were in total grief, I was totally shattered and could not even understand what was happening around me. At a time like that, she made it a point to walk out of prayer meetings arranged for my husband. Very strange behaviour which now did not bother us as we were totally overwhelmed by the huge disaster in our lives.

About 3 to 4 years after my husband's death, early one morning, on January 1, I got a phone call; somebody was crying at the other end. Then I heard, "I am so sorry, Shireen Apa, so sorry. I want to make up with you, Raza and Insha. So sorry, please accept me back like old times, please!" I told her, "It's alright. Come home." She came and things got sorted out, though it was awkward at first. My family and I give her all the support she needs and she on her part works very hard to keep the relationship healthy.



After writing this, I wonder if all this really happened. Life is stranger than fiction. - **Shireen**



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